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ERHARD, Ludwig

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

Ludwig Erhard, internationally renowned for his role in the "miracle" of Germany's post-war economic recovery and prosperity, has been Minister for Economics since 1949 and federal vice chancellor since 1957. Erhard remains one of the political figures most frequently mentioned as a possible successor to Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, despite evidences during the past two years of antagonism and mutual distrust between the two Christian Democratic leaders.

Born February 4, 1897 in Färth, Bavaria, Erhard entered the Imperial German Army in 1916 and in 1918 was severely wounded. After recovery he studied economics at the University of Frankfurt, receiving his Ph.D. degree in 1924. He spent the next four years doing research for various business firms and from 1928 to 1942 was employed by the Institute for Economic Observation in Würzburg as assistant, department head and director. Erhard spent the last three years of World War II as director of the Institute for Industrial Research in Würzburg and Bayreuth. Immediately after the German collapse in 1945, he was appointed economic adviser for Upper and Middle Franconia by U.S. Military Government authorities who were seeking economists with anti-Nazi records. In 1945 he was named Bavarian Minister for Economics and the next year became director of the Money and Credit Office of the Bizonal Economics Administration. Elected to the Bundestag in 1949, Erhard was appointed Minister for Economics in September of that year.

Erhard is an extrovert, radiating energy, well-being, optimism and vigor. An able extemporaneous speaker, he is probably a better talker than listener, since he is firmly convinced in the correctness of his own views. Forthright and impatient, he is frequently undiplomatic both in action and speech and, on occasion, his bluntness has caused minor furors. He is a liberal economist who devoutly believes in the supreme efficacy of market competition and private enterprise, on the one hand, and consumer sovereignty, on the other, as the determining economic forces in Western society. However, he does not always give the impression of sophistication when dealing with problems of mixed economic and political character. One of the sources of friction between himself and Chancellor Adenauer is Erhard's outspoken criticism of the restrictive economic features of the European Economic Community, notwithstanding the EEC's political significance for Germany.

Strongly pro-Western in orientation, Erhard is quite friendly to the United States and highly receptive to U.S. advice and influence. A Protestant, Erhard married in 1923. There are no children.

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